

## Stress

When I was in eighth grade, I was so excited for high school. I knew that it would be harder, but I didn't think that it would be *much* harder. The day before school started, I transferred high schools unexpectedly and started the next day with all honors classes.

It was a hard transition for me. Like I read in American Girl's *A Smart Girl's Guide to Starting Middle School* (yes, I actually read that, not to mention religiously), all of the honors teachers acted like their subject was the only one that mattered, and they assigned homework accordingly. In addition, I was entering the infamously difficult honors English class along with honors biology and math. I was swamped.

The next two years I continued taking all-honors classes (unfortunately, they just keep snowballing). More honors English, chemistry, Spanish, physics, history. It got to the point that I started to think that even my freshman year was a piece of cake.

But it does get easier (or if you want to take a different approach, like my freshman English teacher always said, it doesn't get easier, but it gets more *manageable*). Anyway, the takeaway is that if a mess like me could pull herself together, so can you!

### **Start early!** (Read: Don't procrastinate!)

Quite obviously, waiting until the last minute will just increase your stress. If it's a big project, give yourself some breathing room by at least having a good idea of what you have to do by reading the prompt/rubric/etc. and planning it out, even if you don't start on it just yet.

### **Take a break!**

Don't try to do everything at once! Set a timer (but don't make the time period *too* short) and take a breather. Get up and stretch, take a walk, grab a snack, or read a book. When you return, you'll be refreshed and ready to tackle it again.

### Frustrated? **Admit to needing help!**

If it's the night before a big project is due (AKA you didn't follow the "Don't procrastinate" rule), I hate to say it, but if you know what to do - buckle down and do it! You might be forced to enlist grudging parents and siblings or work through the night, but you'll learn your lesson: next time, don't even put yourself in this situation in the first place!

If you don't know what to do, it's crisis time. Ask your friends or just admit defeat and ask for an extension (with a proportional reduction in the grade). Most importantly: don't ever, ever do it again!

However, if it's not due in the immediate future, follow the second step - take a break! It's always better to come back to something with fresh eyes.

Starting early and splitting a project into manageable chunks is the best advice I can give you for the material, it just gets harder the older you get so **start good habits now**. The last thing we have to talk about is friends...

The honors circle is a tricky group. Competitive “what-did-you-get?”ers can get on your nerves, and sometimes it *is* better not to know. Politely ask them to stop or change the subject if you can.

Also, **don't be a jerk** yourself and stress your friends out! There's a big difference between reminding someone that something is due and psyching them out about it, so be courteous.

**Talking with friends** about work can both help defuse stress *and* be stressful - if you feel that it's tipping the balance, you can always stop and change the subject.

If you're having trouble with the material...

Don't be afraid to **ask your teachers for help!** They're a great resource, and they usually hold office hours before/after school, during lunch, etc. (Making a personal bond with your teachers can also be a great help when it comes time to write those letters of recommendation for college, wink wink nudge nudge).

There are also a number of **clubs** where students tutor their fellow students in classes they've already taken, and private tutors can help as well (though they can get pricey).

Finally, **websites are great resources!** Links to online textbooks often have resources to better explore the material, and sites like Khan Academy have video tutorials and can give you extra practice.

Of course, the concept of stress will never completely go away, but it's not necessarily a good thing if it does. Everyone needs a little motivation to do their best, after all.